

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

OFFERING MILITARY DEPENDENTS AND NONACTIVE DUTY MILITARY THE OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FEDERAL EMPLOYEES HEALTH BENEFITS PROGRAM

HON. ED PASTOR

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 29, 1995

Mr. PASTOR. Mr. Speaker, recently, the Civil Service Subcommittee of the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee held hearings into the problems with the military health services system. Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs described the three biggest problems in military health care as "access, access, access." Those of us who have military installations in our congressional districts are all too familiar with these problems. It is not unusual for our caseworkers to be helping military spouses or dependents receive health care treatment because they could not get a doctor's appointment at the on-base military clinic.

In all fairness to the Defense Department, the Office of Health Affairs has been working to improve access. Last December, DOD announced it was expanding its health care program to provide military dependents and retirees with a triple option health care benefit. The cornerstone of the plan is the Tricare Prime option which affords beneficiaries the option to enroll in a managed care program. Beneficiaries will also be able to choose the current health care coverage provided under the CHAMPUS—now called Tricare Standard—fee-for-service program. The third option—Tricare Extra—will give beneficiaries access to a preferred provider plan.

The Tricare plan leaves many questions unanswered, and many military families are skeptical that Tricare will increase access to the health care.

Today, I am introducing legislation that would offer military beneficiaries the opportunity to participate in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program [FEHBP] on a demonstration basis in States where beneficiaries care covered under the Tricare Program. FEHBP has been held up as a model for containing health care costs and providing access to Federal employees. Certainly, the military families and retired military personnel deserve the same health care access and advantage of the FEHBP's wide range of choices. The current system of providing health care to military beneficiaries on a space-available basis, through a priority system, is no more than rationed health care. Military beneficiaries deserve better, and I am confident that they will obtain better health care benefits through FEHBP.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is not perfect. It serves as a draft to be perfected. This bill will change as I receive comments from the Department of Defense, Office of Personnel Management, the military coalition, and other inter-

ested parties. It is my hope, however, that this vehicle will raise the issue to a level of debate that will enable us in Congress to seriously study merits of allowing military dependents and military retirees the opportunity to participate in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program.

ITALIAN-AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

HON. WILLIAM J. MARTINI

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 29, 1995

Mr. MARTINI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor and recognition of October as Italian-American Heritage month and to acknowledge the accomplishments and contributions of Italian-Americans. As an American with Italian roots, I appreciate the significance of this month. My grandfather Michael came here from Italy to begin a new life, seeking opportunity for himself and his posterity. As many older Italian-Americans can attest, life in the States was not necessarily easy. Our people worked hard and labored long hours in some very difficult jobs, seeking only to earn an honest living. Michael Martini actually worked 16 hours a day making hats and selling them out of a little shop in what would become my hometown of Passaic, NJ.

Despite hard work, the road was not always easy. At times ethnic discrimination reared its ugly head to dampen the progress of Italian-Americans; they were often assigned the most menial tasks or passed up for promotions because of their names or their accents. Even as late as the 1970's, prejudice against Italian-Americans was not unknown.

One such example occurred during a 1970 City University of New York enrollment expansion in New York City. As the University enrollment experienced unprecedented expansion, faculty members born of Italian-American heritage were unjustly denied tenure. A small yet strong group of faculty began meeting on a regular basis to discuss the injustice unfolding all around them. After many years of cultivating support from outside agencies and State legislators, Italian-American descendants slowly but surely leveled the playing field. On March 17, 1975, Chancellor Kibbee of the City University of New York addressed the interests of the minority group developing academic, cultural and political programs aimed at the progress of the Italian-American society.

As they should, Italian-Americans have and will fight all forms of discrimination and prejudice head-on with pride and a fiery spirit. This is just one aspect of our culture we should remember as Italian-American Heritage month begins, and I want to urge my colleagues, especially those of Italian descent, to join me in the celebration.

TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE JUDGE GEORGE C. STEEH III

HON. DAVID E. BONIOR

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 29, 1995

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, the March of Dimes is an organization with a noble mission: to fight birth defects and childhood diseases. We all share the March of Dimes dream which is that every child should have the opportunity to live a healthy life.

For the past 12 years, the southeast Michigan chapter of the March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation has honored several Macomb County residents who are outstanding members of our community and have helped in the campaign for healthier babies. This evening, the chapter will be hosting the 12th annual Alexander Macomb Citizen of the Year award dinner. The award, instituted in 1984, is named after my home county's namesake, Gen. Alexander Macomb, a hero of the War of 1812.

This year, the March of Dimes has chosen my good friend, Judge George Steeh III, as a recipient of the award. Serving as a justice is not simply a job for Judge Steeh, it is an avocation. As he recently said, "I feel there's never a day that goes by where I don't have the opportunity to improve the human condition in my work." In his work and his private life, whether it be with at the Macomb County Circuit Court, the March of Dimes, Catholic Social Services, or the Comprehensive Youth Services, where he serves as an officer and member of the board of directors, George's involvement within the community exemplifies his commitment to improving the human condition.

Dr. Jonas Salk's polio vaccine is just one of the more famous breakthroughs that would not have been possible without March of Dimes research funding. And, without people like Judge Steeh the job of protecting babies would be that much more difficult.

I applaud the southeast Michigan chapter of the March of Dimes and Judges George Steeh for their leadership, advocacy, and community service. I know that Judge Steeh is honored by the recognition and I urge my colleagues to join me in saluting him as a 1995 recipient of the Alexander Macomb Citizen of the Year Award.

"GINGRICH AND THE COPPERHEADS"

HON. NICK SMITH

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 29, 1995

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I would like to submit this important article by Mr. Stuart Sweet into the RECORD. I urge my colleagues to review it and heed its message.

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